



## **COUNCIL**

Monday, 16 December 2019

### **'LONDON ROAD', LOWESTOFT, HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. On the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2019 following a bid submitted by East Suffolk Council (ESC), "London Road" Lowestoft was announced as 1 of 69 successful high streets to move onto the next stage of Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zone Programme. The confirmation and funding is on an 'in principal' basis dependent on the successful design and submission of a Delivery Plan to Historic England by December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The Delivery Plan includes details of the 'in principal' grant funding allocation of £561,870 from Historic England, profiled for the duration of the four-year programme.

- Match-funding of £338,738 is required from East Suffolk Council, which will be profiled over
2. 4 years. This funding will not be committed before confirmation that the funding from Historic England has been awarded. It has been agreed with Finance that ESC match funding will come from the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve. This report seeks Full Council approval for the requested match-funding contribution for the programme.

- In order to fulfil the terms of the existing North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone and the London Road High Street Heritage Action Zone additional staff resource is required from the
3. Planning and Coastal Management Team. This report seeks Full Council approval for the provision of additional budget to provide for extra, fixed-term dedicated Planning resources to effectively deliver both Heritage Action Zone's. The amount requested is £181,238 for two roles, commencing April 2020, over the four-year period of the programme. This will also be funded from the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Harbour, Kirkley
<b>Cabinet Members:</b>	Councillor Craig Rivett Councillor David Ritchie
<b>Supporting Officers:</b>	Paul Wood Head of Economic Development and Regeneration 01394 444249 <a href="mailto:Paul.wood@eastsuffolk.gov.uk">Paul.wood@eastsuffolk.gov.uk</a>  Liz Beighton Planning Development Manager 01394 444778 <a href="mailto:Liz.beighton@eastsuffolk.gov.uk">Liz.beighton@eastsuffolk.gov.uk</a>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Recently, Lowestoft has focused on its cultural and heritage assets as a way of unlocking investment and driving regeneration. Projects such as Making Waves Together, the First Light Festival, Lowestoft Ness and the existing North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone are building a sense of pride and aspiration for the town.
- 1.2 In July 2019, ESC, on behalf of a wider partnership, submitted a first-stage (two-stage process) Expression of Interest (EOI) bid into the Historic England High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Programme, an initiative created with the Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS). The purpose of this initiative is to designate historic high streets in England that have the potential to become focal points to drive sustainable economic growth, deliver a cultural programme and engender a sense of pride in place for communities e.g. using the historic environment as a catalyst for economic growth. To be considered for designation, the area put forward had to be a high street (or high streets) with historical interest, with a number of wide-ranging issues, and which fell within the boundaries of a designated Conservation Area. The scheme enables the grouping of projects within a high street into a single vision, harnessing Historic England's expertise and funding.
- 1.3 Lowestoft was considered to be a strong contender by Historic England, due to the current condition of the high street areas, the success achieved so far in the existing North Lowestoft HAZ, and the potential that could be achieved through the sharing of resources and governance. The proposal put forward to Historic England was for an area named 'London Road', which is an area in central Lowestoft covering London Road South, Station Square and a part of London Road North. The area follows the South Lowestoft Conservation Area which was part of the eligibility criteria. It was not possible to extend to the full length of London Road North as this area falls out of the conservation area boundary. Whilst the primary focus of the bid area is centred on the high street (retail

areas), the HSHAZ boundary area will also cover Lowestoft's South Seafront, recognising the importance of connecting retail and leisure.

1.4 The EOI was one of 69 successful high streets bids to be announced in September 2019 by the Government, which would move onto the programme design stage. The programme design stage involves the production of a delivery plan for the scheme, including agreeing budgets for 4 years. The delivery plan will need to be agreed by Historic England before written confirmation of the grant funding for the scheme is confirmed. This will take place during January 2020.

1.5 The key objectives set out in the 'London Road' High Street Heritage Action Delivery Plan are to:

- Improve the natural, historic and built environmental quality of the area
- Enhance the vitality and viability of the high street through improvements in the high street offer, including bring back long-term vacant properties into use and the restoration of historic shopfronts
- Enhance the cultural offer of the area to ensure sustainable economic growth
- Improve connections and permeability within the area including improvements public space and connections to other parts of the town
- Build capacity amongst partners and the community, engendering pride in place through a programme of heritage, cultural and community events, encouraging learning and engagement through heritage
- Promote and raise the profile of the HSHAZ and the area's heritage within the community and wider area

1.5 This will be achieved through ESC working in partnership with Historic England, Lowestoft Town Council, Lowestoft Vision and East Suffolk Buildings Preservation Trust to deliver a 4 year programme of coordinated and connected interventions. Project interventions will include:

- HSHAZ Shopfront Grant Scheme - for owners of individual properties to invest and undertake heritage restoration works to improve the streetscape. The grant scheme would also attract private investment from building owners, who would need to contribute a percentage of the total cost of the works.
- Community Engagement – a programme of community engagement will target businesses, property owners, residents and visitors. Engagement will connect stakeholders to the heritage of the area, allowing them opportunities to fully understand and appreciate the need to protect their heritage assets within the boundary. This will include community heritage events and training property owners on management and maintenance of their buildings
- Business Support – a package of support will be facilitated by the Council's Economic Development Officers and Lowestoft Vision (BID), as a key partner in the scheme.
- Connectivity and Public Realm – a key part of the vision is to ensure that the HSHAZ area is well connected to other key areas within the town, to ensure a positive and well-

designed visitor experience. A masterplan that links to the current town centre master planning work will ensure improved connectivity, with well-designed public realm that connects and compliments the other parts of the town.

- Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan – The last appraisal review was conducted in 2007, therefore a new appraisal of the Conservation Area is of critical importance, providing up to date information, candidates for local listing and recommendations for the management of the conservation area.
- Shopfront Design Guide- A planning tool, to ensure high-quality design, ensuring that restoration is sensitive and in-keeping to the heritage of the building, the streetscape and the conservation area.
- Lowestoft Post Office Heritage Restoration – Capital funding to restore the heritage frontage features of the Grade II Listed Post Office. As an East Suffolk Council asset, which is being significantly invested in, the Post Office forms a key part in the HSHAZ and the catalyst for regeneration in the high street.

## **2 BENEFITS OF HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE DESIGNATION**

- 2.1 Designating the area as a HSHAZ will help address the issues currently facing the high street, which include the high vacancy rates (24.3%, national average is approximately 11%), the over-reliance on traditional retail, the poor condition of the streetscape / buildings, and levels of severe deprivation. There is marked disadvantage in the HSHAZ area, with the two wards falling within the proposed boundary suffering from significant levels of deprivation. Kirkley Ward is the 10th most deprived neighbourhood in England and Harbour Ward falls within the 10% most deprived areas. Historic England will work in partnership with the ESC and the projects partnership to provide resources such as advice, research, training and other grant funding opportunities.
- 2.2 HSHAZ designation will also be a vital tool in attracting other funding from both public and private sources. In particular, the funding aligns well with programmes operated through the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council, The Architectural Heritage Fund Future High Street Fund and The Towns Fund.
- 2.3 Current successes to date achieved through the North Lowestoft HAZ include:
  - £200,000 additional external funding leveraged;
  - Engagement with the local community in terms of both learning new heritage skills, volunteering opportunities and participation in heritage events;
  - Improvements to the appearance of the area through heritage-led regeneration;
  - Provided a national profile for the town;
  - Feasibility study undertaken for the future use for the future use of the Town Hall;
  - Tackled some of the public realm issues within the Historic High Street;

## **3 HSHAZ BOUNDARY AND RATIONALE**

- 3.1 The proposed 'London Road' HSHAZ boundary will take in a fairly linear strip running from the Surrey Street junction with London Road North to the Carlton Road junction on London Road South in Kirkley (see Appendix 1, boundary map). The boundary

encompasses the South Lowestoft Conservation Area taking in the Character Areas of the Harbour, London Road South and the Seafront. The boundary includes key commercial areas including Station Square, London Road South, part of London Road North and Bevan Street, which contain a number of national and locally listed buildings.

- 3.2 In recent years, the economic downturn, national changes in retail and the way people shop, have had a negative impact on high streets within Lowestoft. Areas within the HSHAZ boundary have faced significant reductions in footfall and to an extent, a lack of identity. This coupled with high numbers of vacant premises, the deterioration of heritage assets, modern developments hiding traditional features, and a lack of investment in public areas, have all contributed to the current conditions.
- 3.3 Strategically, the programme interventions align well with the Waveney Local Plan, The East Suffolk Growth Plan, the Lowestoft Cultural Strategy, the Coastal Community Economic Plan, Lowestoft Seafront Vision, the existing North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone and the recent People & Places work focussed on the future of high streets in East Suffolk. Heritage-led regeneration, cultural development, inclusive growth, the future use of high streets and connectivity are all key themes. The HSHAZ will also closely align with the town centre master-planning work and also the emerging Towns Fund Deal for Lowestoft.
- 3.4 The creation of the 'London Road' HSHAZ is therefore timely and the scheme will help to revive key locations in the centre of Lowestoft through maximising the potential of historic assets and kick-starting regeneration and investment.

It will bring vacant properties back into commercial use and enhance the quality and connections of historic buildings and public spaces. It will improve the overall natural, historic and built environmental quality, making the area more attractive for all.

## **4 THE DELIVERY PLAN**

### **4.1 The Delivery Plan sets out:**

- The vision and aims and aims of the objectives of the programme, setting out the planned interventions and outputs that will take place;
- The project management and partnership governance structure, in which the outputs from the HSHAZ will be managed and monitored;
- A statement of community engagement, which will form a full Community Engagement Plan
- To establish a Cultural Consortium to lead on a cultural programme
- The resources required, both financial and staff time, including the development of the programme budget;
- The timetable for the overall programme for the HAZ, mapping the key milestones
- Communication, monitoring and evaluation requirements.

### **4.2 The deadline for submission of the Delivery Plan to Historic England is 20<sup>th</sup> December**

2019. The Delivery Plan will then be assessed against the Delivery Plan Guidance for agreement in January 2020.

## **5 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?**

- 5.1 The programme supports several strands from the East Suffolk Business Plan including:
- Economic Development & Tourism – A strong, sustainable, and dynamic local economy offering communities more stable, high quality and high value jobs, with increased opportunities for all.
  - Planning – Well managed development of sustainable, thriving communities, with the quality facilities and services needed for a growing economy, whilst preserving the historic and natural environment.
  - Communities – A diverse mix of resilient and supportive communities that value their rural and coastal heritage; which feel engaged, valued and empowered; and where people's needs are met and where they can make a difference to their community.

## **6 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 As part of the delivery plan process, a budget for the four-year programme, starting from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 is being set. The total grant request from Historic England over the programme period is £561,870. This funding is dependent on Historic England's approval of the Delivery Plan. The funding will contribute towards a dedicated officer resource to run the project (HSHAZ Project Officer), a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, a HSHAZ shopfront grant scheme, a shopfront design guide, community engagement programme, a public realm and connectivity masterplan and a contribution towards Lowestoft Post Office frontage restoration.
- 6.2 Match funding (a requirement of the scheme) will be required from East Suffolk Council, over a four-year period, commencing from April 2020. The match funding required, broken down by year is £66,750 Year 1, £84,877 Year 2, £36,059 Year 3 and £151,052 Year 4. Making a total of £338,738. Budgets from East Suffolk Council will not be committed before written agreement is received confirming the funding from Historic England.
- 6.3 To effectively resource and run both the emerging 'London Road' HSHAZ and the current North Lowestoft HAZ, it has been identified that extra staff resourcing capacity is required within Planning and Coastal Management Service to manage the workload and provide a dedicated resource for both programmes. An additional budget of £181,238 is required to fund a 0.5 FTE Planning Officer and a 0.5 FTE Design & Conservation Officer, both fixed term, commencing from April 2020 to April 2024. These additional posts will not be recruited before written confirmation of the grant funding is received by Historic England.
- 6.4 Cabinet considered this report at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019 and recommended to Full Council to approve the match funding and the additional staffing budget as set out in 6.2 and 6.3 above. It has been agreed with Finance for both elements to be funded from the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve. This will be built into the budgeted use of this reserve over the four years, which has a projected level of balance, sufficient to provide for this funding. The current level on this reserve is in the region of £9m.
- 6.5 ESC will be the Accountable Body for the funding and therefore will own and manage the risks associated with the delivery of the project. A process of Governance is established through a HSHAZ Board and a HSHAZ Project Delivery Team. Governance arrangements

will be shared with the existing North Lowestoft HAZ, which will realise benefits in terms of efficiency for both officers and partners.

- 6.6 The HSHAZ Board will include the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Regeneration (who also holds the role of Chair of the North Lowestoft HAZ Board and Heritage Champion), the Cabinet Member for Planning & Coastal Management, Historic England, Chair of Lowestoft Vision, Lowestoft Town Council, Chair of East Suffolk Buildings Preservation Trust, ESC Officers including the Head of Economic Development & Regeneration. The Board will be responsible for setting the overall direction and delivery programme. ESC Ward Members will be communicated on the project through a programme of community engagement.
- 6.7 The HSHAZ Delivery Team will be responsible for managing the programme and reporting into the HSHAZ Board. The team will include the HSHAZ Project Officer, Historic England, Lowestoft Vision, Lowestoft Town Council, East Suffolk Buildings Preservation Trust and officers Economic Development & Regeneration, Funding, Asset Management Design & Conservation and Planning.
- 6.8 The HSHAZ Project Officer will undertake the day to day management of the scheme and will be managed by ESC's Regeneration & Growth Manager. Historic England grant funding will contribute towards the employment of the new HSHAZ Project Officer; however, it cannot fund statutory posts such as Planning and Design & Conservation Officers. The additional Planning and Design & Conservation resource required is therefore not being matched by Historic England funding. In-kind staff time resource will also be required from finance, legal, communications and HR support. The Funding Team will be responsible for the administration of the HSHAZ Grant Scheme.

## **7 OTHER KEY ISSUES**

- 7.1 This report has been prepared having considered the results of an Equality Impact Assessment. The assessment identified that project would have no adverse impacts on communities.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Development of the delivery plan will involve the production of a Community Engagement Statement, which will be developed into a wider and more detailed community engagement plan before the programme goes live in April 2020. A part of the delivery plan requires engaging with local residents and key stakeholders within the boundary in the design of the delivery plan, providing local people with the opportunity to have their say on the planned programme of interventions and finding out what's important to them regarding the heritage of the area. It is envisaged that this type of engagement will help to drive local ownership of the HSHAZ.
- 8.2 During 2019, a wide programme of engagement has taken place with residents and businesses covering each of the high streets in East Suffolk. The results and information generated for the Lowestoft work will be used to inform and develop the Delivery Plan.

## **9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 Two alternative options have been considered:
- 9.2 Option 1 – Do nothing: The high street areas identified within the HSHAZ boundary would be left to continue to decline, with rising vacancy rates and decline in footfall. Heritage

assets within the boundary would continue deteriorate. Communities would continue to feel disjointed from their high streets.

- 9.3 Option 2 – Do not proceed with the HSHAZ but consider individual grant options for project inventions. Economies of scale would not be achieved, with interventions happening piecemeal. Communities would not feel engaged with the interventions. A partnership approach, with Historic England would not be possible. Additionally, it would require match funding and resources for each individual scheme, which may not offer the same value for money.
- 9.4 The preferred option of the HSHAZ would allow for a more holistic approach to be taken to the regeneration and conservation of the area, including resources for community and cultural engagement to ensure pride in place and the longer term sustainability of projects. The partnership, with its sharing of resources and knowledge should help to provide that additional value.

## **10 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 10.1 The HSHAZ will deliver a targeted package of interventions to address key issues within high street areas in Lowestoft. The programme will ensure that the area has achieved visual improvement and a feeling of revitalisation. Through community engagement, pride in place will have been raised, safeguarding the ongoing care and maintenance of the area through enabling communities to input into the project and engaging with partners in the programme.
- 10.2 The ambition of the scheme is to build enthusiasm and momentum, using the programme interventions to encourage private investment in the area and act as a catalyst for future regeneration. The partnership formed will ensure that the Council and partners are committed to ensuring the long-term protection and sustainability of heritage within the area, recognising the legal enforcement measures will be taken if required. Connectivity improvements with other key areas within the town will enable an increase in footfall / economic impact and will encourage visitors to visit other areas that they would not have visited previously. A Cultural Programme will assist in driving up the visitor offer, connecting into initiatives such as First Light.
- 10.3 The Delivery Plan will set out a robust way of working with targeted intervention over the course of the four-year programming period. It will ensure that the tried and tested Governance structure (currently used in the North Lowestoft HAZ) is established, ensuring that resources are directed into areas of need, complementing future plans for the town, in particular through the emerging Town Deal for Lowestoft.
- 10.4 This report seeks additional budget requirement and in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules, this requires Full Council approval.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Council is recommended to:

1. Approve the required match-funding contribution from East Suffolk Council for the 'London Road' Heritage Action Zone programme of; £66,750 Year 1 (2020/21), £84,877 Year 2 (2021/22), £36,059 Year 3 (2022/23) and £151,052 in Year 4 (2023/24), totalling £338,738 and to be funded from the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve; and
2. Approve the additional budget requirement totalling £181,283 over four years, commencing 2020/21 to resource an additional Area Planning Officer (0.5 FTE) and a Design & Conservation



Officer (0.5 FTE), funded from the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve and which will cover both the existing North Lowestoft and the 'London Road' Street Heritage Action Zones.

## APPENDICES

<b>Appendix A</b>	'London Road' Provisional HSHAZ Boundary
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**BACKGROUND PAPERS** Please note that copies of background papers have not been published on the Council's website [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk) but copies of the background papers listed below are available for public inspection free of charge by contacting the relevant Council Department.

Date	Type	Available From
12/11/2019	Equality Impact Assessment	Democratic Services